

# ecological**report**

for

Land to South West of Summergrove,  
Whitehaven  
CA28 8YN

April 2022



bringing ecological excellence to local environments

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**bringing ecological excellence to local environments**

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Approx extent of Ecological Assessment SWS/SLWB/01

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Photo sheet SWS/WB/PS01

Photo sheet SWS/WB/PS02



## **1.0 Introduction**

1.0.1 Whistling Beetle Ecological Consultants were commissioned in April 2022 to undertake an ecological assessment survey on an area of land to the South West of Summergrove, Whitehaven CA28 8YN. The extent of the land is approximately 8Ha.(20acres)with a perimeter boundary of 1500m.

1.0.2 The ecological survey of the site was undertaken to support a planning application for the redevelopment of the land.

1.0.3 The assessment was carried out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 and followed the principles of Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010) with extended targets if points of interest/note were recorded during the walkover survey.

The ecological assessment results are presented in this report, together with the current ecological status of the site, and:

- Any potential significant ecological constraints that may affect the development proposal:
- Recommend further survey/potential mitigation if needed. This ecological report provides information from a survey carried out at the site on the 2nd April 2022.

1.0.4 The survey focused on an assessment of habitats for protected species.

1.0.5 All assessments and surveys work detailed within the report were carried out or personally supervised by Whistling Beetle's Principal Ecologist or by appropriately qualified, licenced and/or experienced surveyors working under the direct supervision of the Principal Ecologist. The Principal Ecologist takes full responsibility for the quality of data collected and any subsequent interpretation. Raw survey data and names of individual surveyors may be provided for bone fide reasons, upon request, but only where this is strictly necessary and does not otherwise conflict with client, landowner or surveyor confidentiality and privacy.

1.0.6 All assessments and surveys were supervised by Whistling Beetle's Principal Ecologist Graham Workman who has over forty years professional experience in the ecology field. He has the specialist knowledge and ecological skills to undertake and complete all the surveys contained within this report.

## **2.0 Site Description**

2.0.1 The site is accessed directly from Dalzell Street which joins the B5295 to the north

A drawing of The Area of Survey is located in Appendix 1, SWS/SL/WB/01

2 Photo sheets of the sites features are included in Appendix 2, SWS/WB/PS01, SWS/WB/PS02.

2.0.2 The site is basically square in shape with a rectangular leg on its north west boundary. It is set within an agricultural landscape used for crop production



and grazing. It is bounded on the northeast by the Summergrove Park residential estate.

- 2.0.3 The site was assessed as having a single Habitat of Principal Importance present within its boundaries.
- Boundary: Hedgerows
- 2.0.4 There are no waterbodies or buildings on site.
- 2.0.5 The main habitats present on the site included
- Semi improved grassland
  - Structures (remnant stone walls)
  - Mature Trees
  - Hedgerow
  - Tall ruderal
- 2.0.6 All habitats present on site were searched for obvious signs of faunal activity, e.g. presence of badger setts, mammal tracks or herpetofauna under refugia. Any mature trees on the site boundary were visually examined from the ground to identify features with the potential to support roosting bats.
- 2.0.7 The area of land has been historically and is currently used for sheep grazing resulting in a very poor grassland sward community.

## **2.1 Habitat Descriptions**

### **2.1.1 Semi Improved grassland**

The internal grassland has and is currently used for sheep grazing resulting in a very poor sward community. There are no areas within the fields that would be suitable for farmland birds nesting, The high number of sheep present are also provided with supplementary food in the form of haylage. The only record of mammal species was the above ground evidence of European mole (*Talpa europaea*) activity. No farmland bird species were recorded in any of the fields although many Covid species were present around the sheep as it was lambing time and Crows and Jackdaws will take advantage of any birthing by-products left on the field.

The very short height of the sward and the abundance of covid specie the fields would not be suitable for skylarks, pipits or lapwings to nest. There were no margin areas where a taller sward would offer more suitable nesting opportunities.

### **2.1.2 Structures**

On the northern boundary the remnants of a stone wall are present. Within the remaining structure which has a maximum height of <1m shrub species such as hawthorn and self seeded native trees have become established. This structure is one of the most interesting aspects of the site but will need some focused management to retain this ecological interest. A single rabbit hole was recorded at the bottom of an area of wall. The hedge topped wall provides good opportunities for bird nest construction and any management of tree removal should be undertaken outside the bird breeding period (April to September).



### 2.1.3 **Mature Trees**

A line of mature Oak (*Quercus* sp) is present on the northern boundary but just outside the site. These trees have play an important role in enhancing the ecological vale of the area in general. A common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) was recorded displaying over these trees several times during the survey period. In the hedgerows a number of mature trees are present increasing the biodiversity value of the site. a

### 2.1.4 **Hedgerow**

There is a mixture of good quality and in places remnant hedgerows on the site. They are primarily on the boundary perimeter apart from a dividing hedge which divides the two fields. The hedge is dominated by Hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.) with the occasional standard tree mixed in.

- The hedge to the south east of the site that bounders Dalzell Street is managed and regularly cut.
- The hedge on the northern boundary is made up of a managed part and where the stone wall is present this length has been unmanaged.
- The hedge that bounders Summergrove Park is managed and dominated by *Crataegus* species.
- The hedge up to and bordering the former tip on the eastern boundary is a mixture of consolidated hedge with gaps and missing lengths.

### 2.1.5 **Tall ruderal**

Some areas of tall ruderal have become established along the Dalzell Street boundary on the inside of the hedgerow. The species mix in this area is dominated by bramble. There is also some tall ruderal species bordering on the former domestic refuse tip which features on the boundary of the site and covers around 1.2 acres.

2.1.6 The loss of this small area will have no significant negative impact on the local biodiversity. In fact with the development of the site for residential purposes there will be an increase in the ecological value of the site due to the diverse planting and mature trees that will eventually feature on the site.

## 3.0 **Species considered as part of the Ecological Assessment of the site**

3.1 During the assessment the site suitability for these European Protected Species and species of note were considered.

- **Bats** (all species)

The key document guiding ecologists attempting to locate bat roosts (of any species) is the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bat Survey Guidelines' (BCT,2007) in which Chapter 8 deals specifically with bats in trees. In addition, there are various other documents that surveyors refer to when designing bat surveys; including Natural England's Bat Habitat Assessment Prior to Arboricultural Operations: Guidance for Natural England's National Nature Reserves (Natural England, 2010) and The Arboricultural Associations' Trees and Bats Guidance Note No 1 (Cowan, 2003).No buildings or trees suitable for bat roosts were recorded on the site. The fields provided sub-optimal opportunities suitable for foraging, but these opportunities would be increased with the introduction of residential garden with associated floral interest.



- **Badgers** (*Meles meles*).  
No landscape features suitable for setts or outliers were identified during the assessment. Badgers could forage on the site but no evidence of badger activity such as latrines, snuffle holes, fur on barbed wire fences or scratching posts was recorded.
- **Water Vole** (*Arvicola amphibius*)  
No water bodies are present on site and as such this species which relies on still or running water will not be resident on site.
- **Barn Owl** (*Tyto alba*)  
Barn owl optimum habitat is rough grassland on low lying farmland field margins (including woodland edges) and linear grasslands, particularly alongside river and ditch banks. The continuity these micro habitats offer can lead to the establishment of new and viable communities of this bird within a region.  
Nesting / Roosting habitat - Barn owls need large, dark, open cavities in buildings or trees to nest and roost in. Once they become established at a site they remain faithful to the area, and to the nest itself, for many generations.  
No buildings or suitable nesting sites were present on the site so Barn Owls will not be resident. Foraging would be very limited due to the absence of suitable tall ruderal or uncut margins. More suitable habitat is present in the general area.
- **Reptiles** (All species)  
No field signs were recorded during the walkover survey. Although some limited suitable habitat is found on site within the stone wall and hedgerow bottoms. A detailed hand search was carried out on moveable refugia. These were inspected but no evidence was recorded.
- **Great Crested Newt** (*Triturus cristatus*)  
No water bodies are present on site and as such this species which relies on still water for breeding will not be resident on site.
- **UK BAP species**  
Some of the habitats recorded on site have potential to support the foraging activities of West European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), Noctule Bat (*Nyctalus noctula*), Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Brown Long – eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*), bird species Hedge Accentor (*Prunella modularis*), Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*), Common starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), and herptile species such as Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*). It is considered likely that all these species have the potential to be occasionally present within the site and the surrounding area.
- **Nesting Birds**  
As all wild birds, their nests, eggs and young are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and subsequent amendments) during the bird breeding season any vegetation removal works must be undertaken outside this period (April to September inclusive). Please note that birds can nest outside the bird-breeding season and therefore should any nests be identified or suspected to be present on site at any time, then works should cease and an ecologist contacted to attend site and provide advice on appropriate working methods. Should site works require being carried out during the bird-breeding season (April to September inclusive) it is recommended that an ecologist conducts a check for nesting birds across the site in advance





of any works commencing. Once complete, should no active nests be identified, a five-day window will allow for site works to commence. Should works cease at any point for more than five days then further checks for nesting birds should be undertaken.

- 3.2 To determine likely presence or absence of protected species can require multiple visits at suitable times of the year. As a result, the surveys focused on assessing the potential of the site to support species of note, which are considered to be of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012), especially those species given protection under UK or European wildlife legislation.
- 3.3 **This report provides an assessment of the ecological interest recorded during the site surveys and highlights areas where further survey work may be recommended if felt necessary.**

#### **4.0 Overall Conclusions and Recommendations**

4.0.1 **The behaviour of animals can be unpredictable and may not conform to characteristics recorded in current scientific literature. This Report, therefore, cannot predict with absolute certainty that animal species will occur in apparently suitable locations or habitats or that they will not occur in locations or habitats that appear unsuitable.**

4.0.2 Results and findings from all the surveys conducted on the site indicate that no further additional survey effort is deemed necessary for an EPS species or species of note

4.0.3 The size and limitations of the proposed development of the site will have no significant negative impact on the biodiversity of the area.

#### **4.0.4 Hedgehog**

##### Legislation

Hedgehogs are listed as a UK 'Priority Species' under S41 of the NERC Act (2006). They also have limited protection under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, which means they cannot be caught or trapped without a licence. The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act (1996) prohibits cruel activities and mistreating of hedgehogs.

The timing and method of habitat clearance has an impact on hedgehogs, but will need to be balanced with other biodiversity needs.

Bramble disturbance is least hazardous in autumn to avoid the bird breeding season, the bulk of hedgehog breeding, and hibernation. Hedgehogs are generally absent from long grass in winter, making this the least hazardous time for cutting, but this isn't necessarily the best time to cut wildlife meadows. Rotational cutting is recommended so that there's always an area left untrimmed for insects to feed on and hedgehogs to nest in.

A high-cut, low-cut method allows nest checks in-between, and increasing the blade height of mowers will minimise risks. Ensure all machine users are trained to be hedgehog aware.

Areas of well-connected native hedging, scrub, bramble, shrubs, dead hedging and piles of dead wood become important nesting and foraging sites. Keeping fallen leaves on the ground or in accessible leaf stores is especially useful for breeding and winter nest building. Mosaic grass management



provides the mix of long grass, short turf, open soil and tussocks needed for foraging and day nesting. Developing nectar sources and herbaceous vegetation provides the diverse microhabitats needed for the invertebrates hedgehogs rely upon. Edge habitat is especially important as hedgehogs often navigate landscapes by following linear features

### **Hedgehog Highways**

Link parcels of land by ensuring boundaries are permeable to hedgehogs. Hedging or hedgehog-sized holes in fencing or walls help create Hedgehog Highways. Ground-level boundary holes should measure 13x13cm and should link as many neighbouring pieces of land as possible. These are easy to include for most fencing contractors, and both wooden and concrete hedgehog-friendly gravel boards can be purchased from some suppliers ready-made. Cinder blocks or piping can be used to deter use by pets.

In the interest of best ecological practice, between October and March, any piles of wood or suitable materials should be checked for hibernating hedgehogs before disturbance. Any hedgehogs found should ideally be left alone. If this is not possible, the hedgehog should be carefully and safely relocated to suitable habitat away from the development site.

#### **4.0.5 Mammal Ramps**

During construction works any excavations that need to be left overnight should be covered or fitted with mammal ramps to ensure that any animals that enter can safely escape.

#### **4.0.6 Vegetation Removal**

Any areas of tall ruderal in particular provide suitable nesting/breeding habitat for small mammals and birds. It is therefore recommended that the removal of all woody vegetation (including bramble) be conducted outside of the bird nesting season, which usually encompasses March to September. If this is not possible and removal works are required to take place during the nesting season, nesting bird survey/s will be required. Removal of woody vegetation outside of the nesting season is therefore strongly recommended.

#### **4.0.7 To prevent any adverse impacts on biodiversity within and adjacent to the site as a result of development activities it is recommended that:**

- A safe system for the correct storage of materials/chemicals should be implemented to ensure that materials are stored in a suitable manner as to avoid potential impacts on vegetation and watercourses adjacent to the site.
- Although the presence of construction waste is unavoidable, it is recommended that waste is removed at the earliest opportunity to avoid contamination of ground and possible disturbance to wildlife. Contractors should also avoid leaving construction waste within the site.

## **5.0 Closure**

This report has been prepared by Whistling Beetle Ecological Consultants Limited with all reasonable skill, care and diligence. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.



The information presented in this report provides guidance to reduce the risk of offences under UK law. However, Whistling Beetle Ecological Consultants Limited is not a legal practice and disclaims any responsibility to the client and others for actions that lead to offences being caused, whether or not the guidance contained in this report is followed. Interpretation of UK legislation is presented in good faith; however for the avoidance of doubt, we recommend that specialist legal advice is sought.

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## 6.0 References

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BTO, (2006). Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-2007 [online]. British Trust for Ornithology.  
<http://www.bto.org/psob/amberlist.htm>

HMSO, (1995). *Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report, Volume 2: Action Plans*, HMSO, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*, English Nature, Peterborough.

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Bat Conservation Trust (2012) *Bat Surveys - Good Practice Guidelines 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Ernest, N and Cheeseman, C. 1996. *Badgers*. T & AD Poyser

Harris, S., Cresswell, W. And Jefferies, D. 1989. *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society Occasional Publication No 9. Mammal Society London.

Natural England, 2007 *Badgers and Development: A guide to best practice and licensing (interim guidance document, version 09/07)*. Natural England Wildlife Licensing Unit, Bristol, England.

### **Web addresses for access to full UK legislation and policy text:**

<http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010:  
[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi\\_20100490\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20100490_en_1)

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981:  
[www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1981/cukpga\\_19810069\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1981/cukpga_19810069_en_1)

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000:  
[www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000037.htm](http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000037.htm)

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006:  
[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga\\_20060016\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060016_en_1)



Planning Policy Statement 9:  
[www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147408](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147408)

## Appendix 1





**Project**  
Ecological Assessment

**Title**  
Land to South West of  
Summergrove, Whitehaven  
CA28 8YN

Approximate extent of land surveyed during Ecological site assessment



Google Earth

Photo Sheet SWSSL/WB/01

Date April 2022

Scale N/A



## Appendix 2





1. South east boundary with Dalsell Street



2. South east boundary with Dalsell Street



3. Existing South east hawthorn hedge boundary



4. Poor quality semi-improved grassland



5. Small area of soft rush indicating wet ground



6. Southern site boundary of wall with colonised shrubs – dominated by hawthorn



7. Evidence of rabbit activity in wall recorded. This was the only record of mammal activity on site.



8. Land adjacent to all boundaries was sheep grazed with little ecological interest



9. Typical divide between boundary and sheep grazed land



**Project**

Land to South West of  
Summergrove, Whitehaven  
CA28 8YN

**Title**

Photographs of site

Photo Sheet

SWS/WB/PS01

Date April 2022

Scale N/A





1. Looking north from site



2. North west boundary



3. Northern boundary of mature oak trees



4. North east boundary with Summergrove Park estate



5. Southern boundary



6. Southern site boundary with former refuse tip



7. Adjacent former tip now colonised by tall ruderal habitat



8. Only other evidence of mammal presence – mole activity



9. The land proposed for development has been employed as sheep pasture for a number of years which has resulted in a poor ecological landscape



**Project**

Land to South West of Summergrove, Whitehaven CA28 8YN

**Title**

Photographs of site

Photo Sheet

SWS/WB/PS02

Date April 2022

Scale N/A



